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DREAMS AND DREAMERS

(2566)

991
[756] Mentioned almost as frequently as doctors are dreamers, whom the Washo view as distinct from shamans. The so-called antelope shaman and rabbit [624] boss fall into this category rather than that of doctor.

Dreamers were gifted with a power to foretell special classes of events in dreams. All Washo believe [828] dreams are likely to foretell the future, and they are alert to find meanings in any dreams they have. Certain persons, those thought of as "dreamers," are reported to have special gifts of this nature.

There are apparently no dreamers among the Washo today, in the sense that the term was used in times past. That is, no one is especially singled out as having infallible dreams foretelling certain classes of [178] events. It may be that the breakdown of the band structure, which was related to economic exploitative activity, in effect, forced everyone to dream for himself. In 987 the past, dreamers were particularly important in set-[756] ting the time and place for activities which were carried out by large groups, such as hunting, fishing, [621] pine-nut gathering, and war. With the disappearance of the last seminomadic bands in the middle 1930's, [178] as well as with the reduced importance of hunting and fishing as group activities, persons having dreams which directed group actions were no longer useful. Today, dreams appear to occur to a number of individuals, and those felt to be of social significance usually deal with catastrophe or other foreboding subjects. The following stories were told to me by the widow under the shadow of witchcraft. When I asked her if she thought any of her friends would tell me their dreams, she replied: "No I don't think no Washo would tell you their dreams. But I'm not superstitious about them things and I'll tell you these two dreams I had."

"One summer I was up at the Lake [Tahoe] with my husband and I had a dream that the gambling house at [539] Dresslerville [a structure known officially as the community center] was on fire. There was kids inside and they was screaming but there wasn't no water. I saw the men all around with buckets but they couldn't do nothing because there wasn't no water. I told my hus-[828] band about the dream the next morning and he said I should take a bath and pray. That's what we do to keep a bad dream from happening."

The following winter the community center did in fact burn down. A young Indian in a rage after having an argument with his father hurled a bottle of kerosene against a wood stove. The resulting fire could not be extinguished because the Dresslerville pump was not working. Whether the dream was really a prophecy after the fact I do not know. It is significant in any case that the prophecy appeared in the form of a dream. My informant's second dream foretold the violent death of a young Indian woman. The prophecy came true two years later.

Her statement that other Washo would be reluctant to discuss their dreams was all too true, confirming the importance that dreams play in their daily lives. A number of tangential remarks suggest that the belief that dreams confer advance knowledge of the future and that

969 southern California; but since the statement came in answer to direct inquiry
114 and no further details were forthcoming, its truth cannot be accepted without further evidence." None of the other investigators among the Washo has found evidence of an annual mourning ceremony. Our informants did not report it.

Birth Ceremonies

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844 Women were active during pregnancy and there were no special observances before birth. When the baby was born, it was bathed, wrapped with its
[854] arms at its sides, and placed in a winnowing basket (modal). Bertha Holbrook says that the baby was not bathed again until the umbilical cord fell off.
846 Stewart (1941, 408) says the baby was bathed about every five days and placed in a new basket after each bath. The afterbirth was arranged with the umbil-
844 ical cord inside and buried upright. Stewart (1941, 408) says the afterbirth
[842] was wrapped in bark before burial. The Washo believed that if the afterbirth was buried upside down the woman would have no more children. The baby's umbilical cord was kept moistened and was wrapped with ground pinenut bark.
[828] When it fell off it was tied to a stick and this in turn was tied to the right side of the winnowing basket. The Washo believed that this would make the baby right-handed.

846 The husband went to a stream and bathed after the birth. He left a
[431] present beside the stream which anyone could come and take. Lowie (1939, 305) reports that after the birth the husband gave some man a buckskin, which
[751] helped to keep disease away from the infant. Until the cord fell off, the husband took a cold bath every morning; was not supposed to sleep at night; ate
[461] no meat, salt or grease; did not gamble or smoke (Stewart, 1941, 409); and was constantly working. The husband's incessant activity was to make the
[431] child industrious in later life. When the cord fell off, the mother announced it. Then the husband went hunting, killed some animal, and distributed it in his household. On this day any nonrelative could come and help himself to the property of the husband. After the cord had fallen off, the husband returned to normal life and could again eat meat, salt and grease.

[834] For a month after the birth, the mother did not bathe; ate no meat, grease, or salt; drank only warm water; used a scratching stick (Stewart, 1941, 408); and she and her husband had no sexual intercourse. Stewart
[514] (1941, 409) says the couple was continent for from six to 12 months. For two weeks the mother lay tightly covered upon a warm bed. The bed was made by digging a shallow ditch, putting hot sand and ashes in it, and covering it with grass. She did not leave the house during this time, even to relieve herself. The Washo believed that the woman had to be cured inside after a birth and that the hot bed and food taboos aided in draining out the bad blood.

14:Stewart E-5 (1936-1938)1944 NR13 Northern Paiute NR13
Washo NT20

even where Washo and Paiute occupy the same colony, as in Reno, peyotists and nonpeyotists are not friendly and keep to opposite ends of the street."

The unification of peyotists into a small vigorous minority roundly denounced by the majority of Washo-Paiute is one of the most significant features in this acculturation study.[a] To understand it, let us review the opposing opinions and attempt to ascertain their foundations. To learn the bases for the different reactions to the new cult, direct questions were asked. Although individuals may have basic, even subconscious, psychological compulsions which are not exposed by this procedure, we do obtain a valuable understanding of the forces operative in opinion formation. Asking peyotists and nonpeyotists why they believe as they do reveals that the reasons for and against the cult fall into the same categories. Almost every explanation in its support has a counterpart in the statements of the opposition. They can be arranged under medical, religious, ethical, prestige, and economic reasons for acceptance and rejection. Kinship and desire for social contacts also aided the diffusion.

As might be expected from the fact that peyotism was first presented and widely advertised as a curing ritual, the greatest number of arguments in its favor have to do with its therapeutic value. Thirty-seven peyotists told me of more than fifty cures supposedly effected by peyote. Seventeen types were enumerated, ranging from cuts, colds, and headaches to goiter, rheumatism, and tuberculosis, whooping cough, blindness, and hemorrhoids. To the believers, peyote, "just like X-ray," reveals the location of the malignancy and, in some cases, the progress toward recovery.

Distrust of government doctors, nurses, and hospitals, and faith in shamans contributed to this belief in peyote.[b] Nonmembers, however, fear hospitals as much as do peyotists, some of whom do go to hospitals at times.[c] Most protracted illnesses for which peyote is used have been treated also by white doctors and Indian shamans.[d] Even many nonpeyotists believe that peyote may cure in some cases, shamans in others, and that sometimes even government doctors succeed where others fail. Joe Green considers himself a shaman regardless of participation in peyote meetings, and Tom Mitchell (P,4) "doctors" his wife between meetings. To Joe, peyote is more potent than his shamanistic power, although analogous, just as peyotism is better than Protestantism, although similar."

Opposition to peyote on "medical" grounds takes the form of two beliefs: that peyote causes insanity, and that it actually causes death. Forty-five Indians told me they resist peyote because it leads to permanent insanity. Joaquin Brown's crimes and derangement are cited by Indians from Nixon to Fish Springs (beyond Bishop) in Owens Valley.

When Joaquin espoused peyotism, he did so with the enthusiasm he probably dis-

[a] The unification of intertribal peyotists in western Nevada and eastern California appears analogous to the Plains practice of intertribal meetings. La Barre states (p. 60) that "at a Shawnee leader's meeting at McCloud there were 12 Kickapoo, 6 Shawnee, 3 Caddo, 2 Kiowa, 2 whites, 1 Wichita, 1 Seminole, 1 Sauk and Fox, 1 Oto, 1 Potowatomi, and 1 Negro."

[b] See Appendix III for statistics.

[c] Reported in U. S. Senate Hearings, 1932, 15131–15141, 15202.

[d] Willie Smokey went to the hospital when he was most active in the cult. Sam Dick's wife Ida was in the hospital in November, 1938, with bladder trouble. Joe Green was at the hospital for trachoma treatments in June, 1939.

[e] Peyote's appeal on the Plains was also curing. La Barre, 43, states that "doctoring . . . in a majority of cases is the expressed purpose of calling a meeting," and that "peyote doctoring has been the occasion many times for the spread of peyotism from tribe to tribe." Radin, 1914, 12, found that among the Winnebago "Rave relied principally for new converts upon the knowledge of this great curative virtue of the peyote." Schultes, 1938, 704, states that in the Plains "the medical reputation of peyote has been fundamental in the establishment, spread, and, to some extent, in the maintenance of the peyote cult."